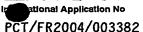
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 7 B01053/32 B010 B01D53/04 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 7 B01D Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included. In the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages Relevant to claim No. Α US 5 843 288 A (YAMAMOTO TOSHIAKI) 1 - 251 December 1998 (1998-12-01) the whole document US 6 132 692 A (ALIX FRANCIS R ET AL) Α 1-25 17 October 2000 (2000-10-17) the whole document Α WO 99/12638 A (HALL STEPHEN IVOR; MARTIN 1 - 25ANTHONY ROBERT (GB); MORGAN ROSS ALEXANDER) 18 March 1999 (1999-03-18) the whole document US 2003/170154 A1 (ANDREWS PETER JAMES ET 1 - 25Α AL) 11 September 2003 (2003-09-11) the whole document _/--Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex. X Special categories of cited documents: *T* later document published after the International filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance invention earlier document but published on or after the International "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is clied to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such docu-"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or , such combination being obvious to a person skilled document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "&" document member of the same patent family Date of the actual completion of the international search Date of mailing of the international search report 26 April 2005 06/05/2005 Name and mailing address of the ISA Authorized officer European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentiaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo ni, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016 Gruber, M

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